

WEEK 3 James discussion and Galatians background

James discussion

BIBLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What did you think was the theme of James?

What picture do you have of the church/believers after reading James?

How is that the same/ different from our experience today?

Which passages encouraged you?

Which passages challenged you?

What do you think about what he said our attitude toward trials should be?

What does he say about the tongue?

What is the seven-part cure for worldliness? 4:7-10

Galatians background

Who wrote it?

Written by Paul

Born in Tarsus, a Roman city, so he was a Roman citizen by birth

A Pharisee, educated in Jerusalem by Gamaliel (the Einstein of rabbis of the time)

Jewish educational system: all boys and girls went to “elementary school” where they

learned how to read and write, and learned much of the Torah, often memorizing large portions of it.

In early teens, if teachers thought you had the ability and the passion for the text of scripture, boys could go on to a “high school”, where you would learn the prophets and study the writings of the great rabbis. All the other teens would begin to learn the family trade and start working. All girls would work in the family, and got married fairly young.

After “high school”, if you were the best of the best, and had that fire of Elijah, you

might want to become a rabbi. You would find a rabbi that you respected and wanted to be like, and would ask him if you could be his disciple. He would observe and evaluate you for a while, then give you his decision. Most didn't make it; then they would go back to the family business. Those who were chosen by the rabbi to be his disciple, would follow him, and live with him 24/7 for several years, learning to become like their rabbi. It wasn't enough to know what the rabbi knew.

You wanted to BE like the rabbi WAS. After several years, you would be a rabbi and have your own disciples. It took an enormous amount of discipline.

Many rabbis had the entire Torah memorized, as well as large parts of the Prophets and Psalms, etc.

Paul was a young Pharisee, he had been Gamaliel's disciple.

He was very zealous to rid the world of this new sect of Jews that followed Jesus. He approved the stoning of Stephen, and was literally going door-to-door dragging Christians away to prison.

As he was on his way to Damascus to begin his persecution of Christians there, he met Jesus.

Acts 9

About the epistle

Galatia is a region, which includes the cities of Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, Pisidian Antioch

Paul went through this region on his 1st missionary journey, and the work had been extremely successful; multitudes had accepted Christ

After Paul left, certain Jewish Christian teachers came, insisting that new believers must keep the law of Moses. Galatians accepted that teaching as well, and there was an epidemic of circumcisions! These teachers were called "Judaizers" or "the circumcision group" because they taught that people must become Jews first, and then become Christians. They insisted that Christianity was a sect of Judaism. They re-instituted the practice of Jewish festival days and ceremonies. They taught that full "privileges" of Christianity were only available to the circumcised, and that Paul wanted to keep them at a subordinate

level. They promoted the law as both a part of salvation and an important part of sanctification (becoming holy).

They also tried to discredit Paul, and say that he was not an original apostle

who had been sent by Christ, and that he was only a messenger who had derived his teachings from the teachings of the Twelve apostles.

They said that he did not have the same authority as the Twelve (that he was their inferior) and that his teachings were now differing from theirs.

So Paul wrote this epistle from Antioch

The Judaizers' efforts ended with the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70, when Judaism and Christianity were beginning to be considered as separate entities.

About the church

Galatia was in center of Asia Minor

Galatians were typically thought of as "fond of change" or fickle in their resolves.

Many worshipped a goddess called Cybele, which involved elaborate ceremonial symbolism to attain full levels of "piety"

Capital was Pisidian Antioch—Paul arrives here after walking ~100 miles with nothing more than a small village, then arrives at this city with paved streets, huge 3-part gates

Caesar wanted to civilize Galatia, so he created 13 military colonies populated mainly with veterans

Population 20-25,000 people

Highest hill of city has enormous colonnaded plaza carved into the hill, with large temple with huge statue of Caesar Augustus. A very "Roman" city, a mini-Rome.

Even the money had an inscription with Caesar Augustus and "the worshipped son of a worshipped god" on it.

Lystra was a market town or small city. Many homes were of mud-brick on a stone foundation.

There was a ruling class of Roman army veterans, and the rest of the population was from a small tribe that had their own language.

Derbe was a smaller town, about 60 miles from Lystra. Gaius came from Derbe.

He later became a leader in the Corinthian church.

Other info

Paul explains the gospel in words of the heart and emotion—as would be effective for a people group whose culture was to be emotional and changeable.

Romans is more of a logical explanation, as would befit that people group.

1:3 “grace and peace” greeting—a mixture of a good Greek greeting “grace” and the traditional Jewish greeting “peace” or shalom

Even in his greeting (which is in all but one of his letters -- Hebrews)

he shows how he is including Gentile and Jew together in the church

Greek model was to train people to be self-sufficient and stand alone, and to have knowledge of the truth. Christian way was to build communities, to support, encourage, and correct each other.

Athletic metaphors: used to explain to a Greek world the passion and dedication that a disciple had to have. Jews knew it as the passion of Elijah, or being like Elijah.

Races were used to declare the glory of their god.

It's as if he's saying : “We are God's Olympians— don't hold back; cross the finish line with nothing left.”

Gal. 2:2, 5:7

Also 2 Tim. 2:5 and 4:7-8, Heb. 12:1 and 12:11, 1 Cor. 9:25-27

4:15 “ tear out your eyes for me” was a common expression for giving up everything for another person

5:19-21 many of these sinful acts listed were actually part of the worship of other gods and goddesses! Sexual immorality was part of the “worship service” at that time.

It's no wonder that many new Gentile believers struggled with these issues in their daily walk with Christ.

Difficult passages

2:16 note the consistency with James; not justified by observing the law; not talking about deeds of faith, but that works does not lead to salvation.

5:6 ...the only thing that counts is faith expressing itself thru love.

2:17-19 "rebuild what I destroyed" ie., go back to sins I did before I was saved, I simply prove how impossible it is to keep the law

3:6 Abraham believed God, and acted on that belief in faith and trust

Demons believe IN God's existence; that's different.

6:2, 5 carry each other's burdens (these are excess burdens that must be shared because they are about to press one down to the ground)

vs. carry his own load (normal amount that each person must carry for himself)

6:17 marks of Jesus: scars suffered in persecution, which meant more than the mark of circumcision the Judaizers were trying to give them

Timeline

(45) Herod has James killed, Jews pleased Acts 12:2

(probably not the James who wrote the epistle)

Herod arrests Peter

Angel releases him

He meets with believers, then leaves for another place

Herod struck down by God

Barnabas and Saul return to Antioch with John Mark

45-48 Saul, Barnabas, and John Mark sent on **1st missionary journey** (Acts 13)

Went to Seleucia, sailed to Cyprus, Barnabas' homeland, arrive at Salamis, go to synagogue

Travel whole island, come to Paphos

Proconsul Sergius Paulus saved

Sail to Perga in Pamphylia, John Mark to Jerusalem

Walks ~100 miles To Pisidian Antioch (capital of Galatia, a “mini-Rome”) , to synagogue

Paul’s sermon, invited to speak further

Next Sabbath, whole city came! Jews jealous

Word of Lord spread thru whole region

Jews incite leading women, Paul and Barnabas expelled from region

To Iconium, to synagogue, great # of Jews and Gentiles believe (Acts 14)

Unbelieving Jews stir up trouble

Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, miracles done, people divided

Plot to stone them

Fled to Lyconian cities of Lystra and Derbe and surrounding countryside

Paul healed cripple, hailed as gods

Jews from Antioch and Iconium won crowd over

Paul stoned, but returns to city(of Lystra) , where Timothy is a boy

Next day, Paul and Barnabas go to Derbe, large # of new disciples

Returned to Lystra, Iconium, Antioch; appointed elders in each church

Went thru Pisidia, came into Pamphylia, preached in Perga, went to Attalia

Sailed back to Antioch, stayed a long time